

# Care of Newly Seeded Lawns

Caring for newly seeded lawns can be a tricky thing depending on a number of variables such as weather, soil, sun, & shade. Below is a list of tips to help you with your newly seeded lawn. Each of the topics listed below are explained in greater detail further in the document.

## **WATERING** (*New seed bed 0-8 weeks*)

- Water newly seeded lawn. Seed bed should not dry out.
- Gently water to avoid washouts.
- Water twice daily, weather dependent. Top ¼- ½ " of soil should be moist.
- Keep surface moist until all seedlings emerge. May take 4-6 weeks or longer.

## **WATERING - YOUNG GRASS**

- After reaching 1-2" high, irrigate every other day, weather dependent.
- Allow surface of soil to dry between watering.

## **WATERING - ESTABLISHED GRASS**

- Increase length of watering time to encourage deeper root systems.
- Lawns need 1" of water per week. Measure using a rain gauge.
- Plan on watering more during hot, dry summer months.
- Watering in the evening or at night makes turf prone to foliar diseases.

## **WEEDS**

- Do not come from seed mixtures, weeds are present in native soil and blow with the wind.
- Many kinds of weeds will be eliminated once mowing or string trimming begins.
- Do not manually pull as lawn is becoming established, will damage seedlings and leave annoying divots.
- If weeds are growing faster than lawn, mow or string trim once they reach 4-5" tall.
- Broadleaf weed killer can be applied after the fourth mowing.
- **Takes about 2 years to develop a thick stand of grass plants.**

## **MOWING**

- Start mowing when grass or weeds reach 4-5" tall.
- Should be maintained at about 2 ½ - 3" high.
- Avoid damaging lawn and only mow when soil is firm and relatively dry.



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## FERTILIZING

- After first 2 mowings, apply a slow-release starter fertilizer.
- 2 to 4 applications of fertilizer per year for an established lawn.
- Apply 3-4 lbs of slow-release nitrogen per year.
- Water in all fertilizer applications, and avoid applying in hot, dry weather.

## EROSION & STRAW MATS

- Do not remove erosion mats, they will naturally break down.

## TRAFFIC AND USE

- Avoid heavy traffic during the first few months of growth.

## DISEASE AND INSECT PROBLEMS

- Difficult to diagnose, consult an expert. Send samples to the O.J. Noer Diagnostic Clinic.
- Avoid overfertilizing and thatch accumulation to minimize risk of disease or insect problems.
- Thatch layer greater than 1/2" is excessive and should be aerated to encourage break down.
- All established lawns should be aerated annually in the fall.

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## COMPOST SEEDING METHOD

We are excited to offer our environmentally responsible compost seeding method. The compost is a combination of brush, yard clippings, and biodegradable wood waste from Veridian homes that normally would have been disposed of in a landfill.

The compost was created using approved techniques, including monitoring the temperatures of actively decomposing compost to ensure a product high in nutrient content and virtually weed seed free.

The Bruce Company's compost seeding method involves applying a layer of our prepared compost over the native soil. This provides a buffer layer that reduces the germination rate of weed seeds which are present in the native soil. Through the use of our Blower Trucks we apply a combination of our premium seed mix and starter fertilizer.



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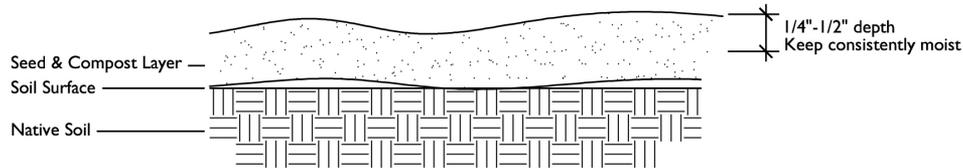
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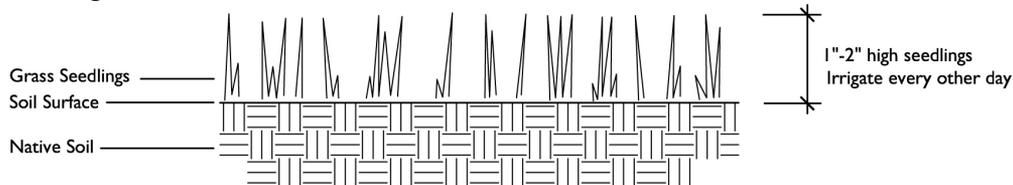
## WATERING

Temporary irrigation is installed on the lawn for three weeks following the installation of the compost and seed. The irrigation is on a timer and is set to turn on 2-4 times per day depending on the sun, wind, and temperature. Watering is the most important aspect of seed germination; the seed bed should not be allowed to dry out. Spray should be gentle to avoid puddling, which dislodges seed and causes washouts.



Newly Seeded Lawn

When the temporary irrigation is removed, you will have to water daily depending on temperature, wind, and exposure. Keep checking to be sure that the upper  $\frac{1}{4}$  -  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch of soil is constantly moist. A fan-type (oscillating) sprinkler is preferred to a rotary (pulsating) sprinkler because they have less potential to dislodge seedlings. Avoid dragging hoses across the lawn, as this will dislodge seedlings as well. Watch for and sprinkle dry spots, as water will evaporate unevenly from the lawn. Keep the surface moist until seedlings are up, which could take 4-6 weeks or longer, depending on the seed varieties.



After Germination

The watering program has to change once seeds have germinated. After grass is up and roots are down, the intervals between irrigations should be further apart. When the seedlings are 1-2 inches high, irrigate every other day, depending on the weather. Allow the surface of the soil to dry between watering. If the soil is continually wet, this can lead to fungal problems, such as damping-off diseases. These diseases can kill seedlings under high humidity, especially during periods of warm temperatures.

After establishment, increase the length of watering time so the moisture will penetrate deeper into the soil. This will encourage grass to form a deeper, stronger root system. You should plan on watering during droughty summer months. Established lawns perform best with about 1 inch of water total per week, from irrigation and/or rainfall.

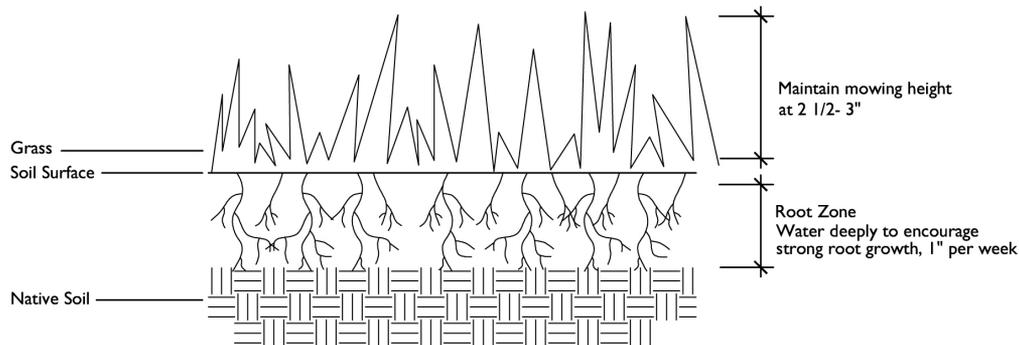


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After Establishment

If possible, avoid watering late in the evening or setting automatic irrigation systems on night watering. Turf that is wet during cool or humid evenings is more prone to foliage diseases. Watering during the early morning hours is preferred, as it allows the sun to dry the leaf blade surface which prevents fungal spores from germinating.

## WEEDS AND GRASS COVERAGE

Weeds do not come from the seed mixtures, but from the native soil. Weed seeds often lie dormant for a long period of time until the soil has been disturbed or turned over. This exposes the seeds to water and light and allows them to germinate. Weed seeds can also be blown in on the wind, and will easily germinate on patches of bare soil.

Many kinds of weeds such as velvetleaf and lamb's quarters are common and will be eliminated once mowing or string trimming begins. If annual grasses such as foxtail, crabgrass, and barnyard grass germinate with your new seeding, wait until the following spring to apply a pre-emergent product. These annual grasses will be killed by the first frost in fall and the pre-emergent will prevent any additional weed seeds from germinating. In general, do not manually pull weeds as your lawn is becoming established because you will inadvertently pull a large number of grass seedlings at the same time. The soil that is removed when pulling weeds can also create divots that result in an uneven surface when mowing the lawn.

During some seasons the weeds will grow faster than the grass and it will be necessary to mow or string trim the weeds once they get 4-5" tall.

Broadleaf weed killer can be applied after the fourth mowing. Broadleaf weed control is very effective if applied in the fall. Avoid applying weed killer when temperatures are over 75 degrees or on windy days.



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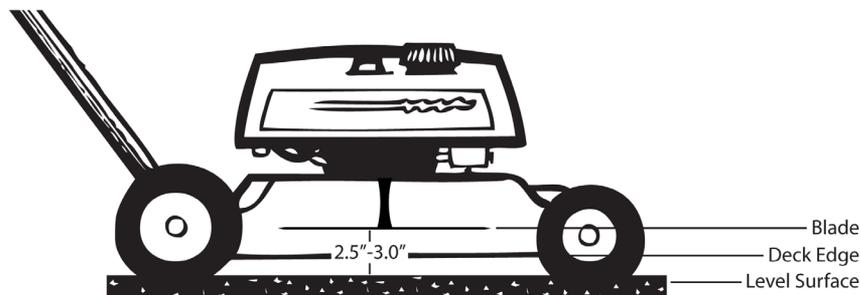
# Care of Newly Seeded Lawns

It takes about two years to develop a thick stand of grass plants. Generally, in the first year coverage is about 50 percent. The grass consists of single, straight stalks. If proper care has been given, the second year has about 90 percent coverage as the bluegrass rhizomes fill in to form a solid, dense turf.

## MOWING

Start mowing when the grass reaches 4-5 inches high. Do not allow the grass to get much longer than the height at which it will be maintained. Kentucky Bluegrass and Red Fescue should be maintained at 2.5-3 inches in height. Only mow when the soil is firm and relatively dry and the grass is well-rooted. Mowing on a wet soil will pull out seedlings and cause ruts.

Good mowing practices are crucial to the success of your lawn. Keeping your lawn mower tuned up and the blades sharp is important so that the blades of the grass are cut cleanly and not left with torn or ragged edges due to a dull blade. Damaged blades of grass can increase the chances of diseases and reduce growth rates. Be sure to set your mowing height by placing your mower on a level surface such as your garage floor. With the mower turned off, measure from the floor to the edge of the blade and adjust the height of the blade to 2.5"-3.0". The mower deck is usually at a different height than the blade so be sure "not" to use the edge of the deck as your guide for your mowing height.



In most cases it is not necessary to bag your lawn clippings. We recommend using a mulching mower to mow your lawn. The mulching mower cuts the blades of grass into smaller pieces and returns them back into the turf. These clippings will decompose and add beneficial nutrients and water back into your lawn. In late fall, usually in November, the last mowing of the season occurs. At this mowing it is recommended to pick-up the clippings by the use of a bagger. If clippings are left on the lawn they may not decompose adequately before winter and may leave a partially decomposed green slime on your turf.



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## FERTILIZING

At the time of seeding, the lawn was given an application of starter fertilizer. After the first mowing or two, additional starter fertilizer should be applied. Starter fertilizer is considered a complete fertilizer, meaning it contains nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium (N-P-K). Use an organic fertilizer or slow-release chemical fertilizer. A young lawn can be easily burned and should not be treated with a quick-release nitrogen fertilizer.

Depending upon when your lawn is seeded, two to four applications of fertilizer can be applied to maintain your lawn. A simple fertilizer schedule to follow is called the "Holiday Schedule". The first application should be made on or around Memorial Day. The second application should be made around the 4th of July and the third application on Labor Day. The final application should be made around Halloween or after the last mowing of the season.

A yearly fertilizer program on an established lawn includes 3 to 4 pounds of slow release nitrogen per 1,000 square feet, which is applied over several spring and fall applications. Nitrogen (N) is the nutrient needed in the largest quantities, followed by potassium (K). Be sure to water in all applications of fertilizer, especially during hot months. Avoid fertilizing unirrigated lawns in the heat of summer. A slow-release fertilizer will reduce the danger of fertilizer burn and the over-stimulation of top growth.

As an organic alternative, corn gluten also acts as a pre-emergent control and fertilizer. It is for sale at a number of garden centers and co-ops in your local area.

Fall fertilizer applications are the most important. Fertilizing at this time helps the grass make use of the ideal sunlight, moisture, and temperature conditions. Also, this is when turf grasses are growing most actively, strengthening their roots, and tillering to develop new plants which will fill in weak areas of the lawn. Fertilizer applied in the fall provides the needed energy for grass to not only grow, but survive Wisconsin's harsh winter conditions and recuperate in spring with a healthy, gradual green-up. According to University of Wisconsin research and our experience, fall feeding is essential.

## EROSION MATS

Depending on the degree of erosion expected, erosion mats may be used to stabilize the soil. Do not remove any straw matting used to prevent erosion that was applied during seeding. All erosion mats used by the Bruce Company are designed to break down naturally after enough time has passed to allow the grass seed to become established and therefore stabilize the slope. Removing the erosion mats before the turf is established will damage a significant percentage of the seedlings.



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## TRAFFIC AND USE

The roots of immature grass are easily harmed by heavy traffic, even during the winter months. Keep traffic off the lawn as much as possible during the first few months of growth.

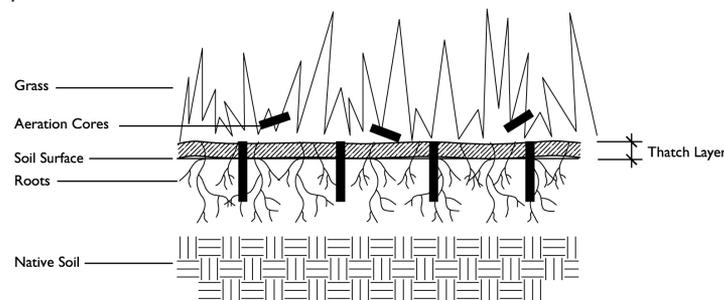
## DISEASE AND INSECT PROBLEMS

Diseases and insect problems are hard to diagnose in grass and advice should be sought from an expert. For the most accurate diagnosis of turf problems, samples can be sent to the O.J. Noer Diagnostic Clinic and you will be charged a fee. Do not apply chemicals before the problem is identified.

In general, there are two things to avoid when caring for your yard which can contribute to lawn problems and diseases. The first is over-fertilization of a lawn. Do not apply more fertilizer than the recommended rate, especially in early spring or in hot, humid weather. Over-fertilizing promotes excessive top growth and may accentuate disease development.

The second condition to avoid is thatch accumulation. Thatch is the matting of undecomposed dead stems, leaves, and roots in a layer just above the soil surface and below the green, vegetative growth. It is not grass clippings. Too much thatch keeps water from penetrating the soil and roots begin to grow into the thatch rather than penetrating deeply into the soil. Insects and diseases can easily establish themselves in a thick layer of thatch.

Thatch layers  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch thick or greater are excessive and should be aerated in order to encourage the decomposition process. Aeration by machine removes cores of thatch and soil. These plugs are deposited on the surface of the turf and contain bacteria and other beneficial organisms that will break down the thatch layer. Core aeration also opens up hardened, impenetrable soil and allows water, air, and fertilizer to reach the turf roots.



Lawn Aeration

All lawns should be aerated annually after the first full year of growth. Fall is the preferred time to aerate because soils are adequately moist and any weed seed that germinates will be killed off by winter conditions.



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